Maine Governor's Energy Office
Transmission Planning Stakeholder Group Meeting #1
Pursuant to Resolves 2025, Ch. 57
July 29, 2025 | Meeting Summary

Meeting in Brief

Maine Governor's Energy Office (GEO) convened a meeting to provide an overview of Resolves 2025, Ch. 57 "Directing the Governor's Energy Office to Conduct a Study Regarding the Future of Electric Transmission Infrastructure in the State" and contextualize GEO's upcoming transmission planning efforts aimed at developing a Maine Transmission Strategy. Sixteen members of the stakeholder group defined in the Resolve and approximately 31 other interested parties gathered virtually using Zoom to learn about GEO's plans and provide input on GEO's next step of issuing a transmission study request for consultant proposals. A list of the stakeholders in attendance are attached to this document. Presentation slides are available here[1].

Background

Celina Cunningham, Deputy Director at GEO, reviewed key factors driving the need for transmission modernization planning. These factors include eligibility and resilience in the face of increasing storm events, anticipated electricity load growth, aging infrastructure, and emerging transmission technologies that can maximize system capacity and potentially address congestion issues. Cunningham noted that New England's transmission expenses are higher than in other regions. She also highlighted that electricity consumption is projected to rise in Maine as Mainers choose more efficient and affordable heating and transportation options. The study offers an opportunity to consider reducing overall system costs while addressing these challenges.

Panel Discussion

Ethan Tremblay, GEO, facilitated a panel discussion highlighting distinct roles in transmission planning and project permitting within Maine and New England. Melissa Winne of ISO New England outlined its primary responsibility for power system planning, which involves studying, analyzing, and planning the bulk transmission system, as well as administering regional electricity wholesale markets and operating the bulk power system. Michael Haskell from the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) then detailed the PUC's role in permitting transmission infrastructure in the state, specifically through granting a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) and setting planning standards for the local transmission

[1] https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Transmission%20Stakeholder%20Meeting%20July%2029%202025.pdf

system. Finally, Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), explained the DEP's involvement in assessing environmental impacts and effects on existing land uses, with authority derived primarily from the Site Location of Development Law and Natural Resources Protection Act. Presentation slides are available here[2].

Overview of Maine Transmission Study

Robert Snook, Transmission Program Coordinator at GEO summarized the transmission study and next steps. GEO is seeking a consultant to assist GEO in developing a state transmission strategy. The transmission strategy aims to reduce overall energy cost for Maine ratepayers, meet Maine's renewable energy goals, reduce congestion, and align with state energy laws and policies, including LD 197. GEO requested feedback from the stakeholder group on the consultant's scope of work: creating a baseline "build-as-usual" scenario, conducting cost-benefit analysis for multiple other scenarios, and establishing a timeline for transmission modernization, while completing the additional steps specified in LD 197.

Stakeholder Input & Questions

Stakeholders' questions and comments are summarized below.

- A stakeholder informed the group about Maine Department of Transportation's utility accommodation rules policy, available on their website, which primarily deals with distribution but also has right-of-way information applicable to transmission.
- When implementing modern technology in transmission systems, a stakeholder said it is crucial to keep the interlinks between components in mind, as these can add complexity to system improvements. The New England system is constrained due to voltage and stability, not just thermal limits.
- A request that the effort include a statewide analysis to determine whether Distributed Energy Resources could displace transmission investments in a more cost-effective manner.

Other Interested Parties Input & Questions

Other interest parties' questions and comments are summarized below.

- Requests that the effort consider:
    - "Apples-to-apples" comparisons when it addresses issues such as sound from transmission infrastructure.

[2] https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Transmission%20Stakeholder%20Meeting%20July%2029%202025.pdf

- A request to prioritize grid security in addition to grid resiliency.
- A degree of flexibility from current state laws to allow engineers to propose solutions that may not yet be permissible in Maine.
- Prioritizing long-term costs and benefits over immediate construction ease, factoring in elements such as ease of future access, vegetation management, and the strategic placement of lines along existing roadways.
- Guidance around potentially increasing the "loss of source" limit, as this may reduce the need for new transmission lines.
- A review of efforts by other Northeast states and the New York and PJM footprints to coordinate regional transmission planning across the Northeast.

Next Steps

- GEO will accept comments on the scope of the consultant RFP over the next two weeks. Comments can be submitted to ethan.tremblay@maine.gov.
- GEO will schedule the next Stakeholder Meeting in the Fall.
- To stay up to date on future meetings and transmission activities at GEO, sign up for CEO's newsletter.[3]

[3] https://maine.us15.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=edd5132b687cf8bdb4a0ac326&id=97f9f88f88

Stakeholder Group Participants

Celina Cunningham, GEO
Susan Chamberlin, Office of the Public Advocate
Dwayne Conley, Northern Maine Independent System Administrator
Heath Cowan, Department of Transportation
Commissioner Michael Duguay, Department of Economic and Community Development
Jeff Fenn, Licensed Professional Engineer
Mike Haskell, Public Utilities Commission
Anna Henderson, Kennebunk Light & Power District
Megan Lamb, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Commissioner Melanie Loyzim, Department of Environmental Protection
Craig Nale, Central Maine Power
David Norman, Versant Power
John Perry, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Francis Pullaro, RENEW Northeast
Molly Siegel, Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future
Jesse Studley, Licensed Real Estate Appraiser

State Legislators and Staff in Attendance

Senator Scott Cyrway
Rep. Steven Foster
Rep. Mathew McIntyre
Annina Breen, Maine House Speaker's Office